Chapter 8:

What Stories? Why Stories at All?

Interpreting an Urban Park

Interpreting Golden Gate National Recreation Area pointed the way not only to better understanding of the park's past but also to a better grasp of the meaning and role of the park in the Bay Area. Astride a powerful national image of the Golden Gate, a vista that graces the national imagination and carries great meaning, the park held many layers of historical and natural significance. It became the home to an almost infinite variety of local cultural representations that taught values of all kinds as it offered the opportunity not only to interpret the natural world, but also the human relationship to it and the possibilities and problems of managing it. In many ways, interpretation became the linchpin of the park, its way of communicating with the endless constituencies that it served.

The stories of Golden Gate National Recreation Area cover the gamut of local, regional, and national history. Nearly every separate park feature lent itself to some form of interpretation and the National Park Service's resource management mission contributed to a rich interpretive infrastructure for the park. Alcatraz Island—where the agency had to determine how best to preserve graffiti from the era of Indian Occupation and the rest of the historic fabric of the island—the Sutro Baths, gun batteries, and other relics of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries and historic agriculture and ranching practices all offered interpretive lenses that showed how the park captured nearly every dimension of human experience. The park's diverse ecology— stretching from the redwoods of Muir Woods to the San Mateo watershed lands, and the earthquake geology evident underneath the surface—gives inspiration to those who would explain the workings of the natural world. The transformed ecology of Crissy Field allowed the park to illustrate the practices of the Ohlone people, the region's pre-European inhabitants. The significance of the Presidio as a military installation and its place in the national drama added to the overall importance of the story of the park. Issues as diverse as the interaction between Native Americans and the Presidio; the role of the Presidio in the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II; public understanding of the issues at stake in the Indian takeover of Alcatraz; and the interpretation of species, such as the snowy plover, Heermann's gulls, environmental restoration, and others all helped shape the context of interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

As a result of the many constituencies at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the interpretation mission required a level of dexterity uncommon elsewhere in the park system. Interpretation had long been the key feature of Park Service communication, the way the agency both cultivated its public and enhanced respect for the parks. The task was easiest and most evident at the crown jewels with mythic connotations, the great national scenic parks such as Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, and at the places that reflected human and especially American history, such as Civil War battlefields and Philadelphia's Independence Hall. Few parks included all of these features as well as the mandate to provide public recreation. Fewer still experienced the incredible day use that consistently put Golden Gate National Recreation Area at the top of park system visitation statistics. This combination of factors assured that park

staff faced myriad responsibilities, especially in regard to visitor safety and resource protection, that distributed NPS personnel and resources across a wider spectrum than at most national park areas. Interpreting became another of the park's balancing acts, a way to maintain constituencies, make new friends, prove the value of the park to a national audience and support local goals. This complex mission required consistent and intense management.

Interpretation also became crucial to the park's identity. Interpretation has historically confirmed for visitors that they are in a national park area. While at Yellowstone or Yosemite, visitors instinctively recognize that they are in a national park. All the signs and symbols that surround them reflect their image of a national park. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the distinction was always less clear and sometimes entirely murky. Nomenclature contributed to this ongoing identity crisis. The multiple entry points into the park defied NPS efforts to define visitor activities. Myriad uses, many of which preceded the park, further complicated definitions and the dual status of law enforcement, assigned to both Park Service rangers and U.S. Park Police officers, made it difficult to clearly delineate the agency's presence. Golden Gate National Recreation Area was difficult to distinguish from the nearby city-owned Golden Gate Park, the subject of so much San Francisco folklore. As a result, interpretation's crucial role at the park extended its significance beyond the role it played in remote natural parks and indeed in most park areas. Instead of merely explaining the features, interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area explained the very presence of the Park Service as well.

The roots of interpretation in the Park Service dated to the 1920s, when the agency sought to extend its reach by becoming the purveyor of information to the public. Interpretation began in parks such as Yosemite, a choice that expressed more about the agency's desires than about the public's needs. Beginning with museums as vehicles for its communication, the agency branched into interpretive walks and hikes, lectures, and other forms of personal communication with the public. Although by 1933 agency interpretation focused on natural areas at the expense of archaeology, the influx of historic sites into the park system during the New Deal gave the agency ready access to a set of areas with which the public could easily identify. By the end of World War II, interpretation had been institutionalized in the park system as one of the many representations of the value of national parks.[382]

After World War II, MISSION 66 provided the Park Service with a level of financial resources that it had never before experienced. This upgraded not only the caliber of interpretation, because the agency could better benefit from existing research and could in some circumstances engage in its own research about the parks, but also the facilities and technological expectations of interpretation. Museums became more numerous, and more complex exhibits aimed to reach a broader variety of visitors with familiar types of media. New visitor centers offered introductory films, slides, and eventually videotapes that described and interpreted the resources of the park even before a visitor saw them. In this, interpretation began to serve a twofold role: not only did it enlighten visitors about the park in question, it also promoted Park Service capabilities.

By the time Golden Gate National Recreation Area entered the park system in 1972, interpretation was a sophisticated process that followed set agency patterns. As was typically the case, the new urban national recreation areas fit uncomfortably within the existing Park Service

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[382] Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1986), 3-42; C. Frank Brockman, "Park Naturalists and the Evolution of National Park Service Interpretation Through World War II," *Journal of Forest History*, January 1978, 19-29; Hal K. Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 172-78.

framework. Interpretation had been largely confined to parks with historical or natural significance, places where Americans came, in the older framing of national park values, to be in touch with the beauty of American nature or the heritage of the nation, not where they came for relaxation, leisure, and recreation. In 1972, the question of whether a national recreation area should engage in conventional interpretation loomed large.

In the extraordinary array of tasks that needed to be accomplished during the early years of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, traditional interpretation was put aside. During the 1970s, interpretation focused on education for children and on recreational values. Fort Point provided one of the park's primary locations for reaching younger audiences. Its established position as a cultural resource guaranteed frequent visits from school groups, and its natural setting provided other interpretation opportunities. By 1977, fort personnel had developed a consistent methodology for connecting with youthful visitors. Interpreters structured their presentations to educational objectives of teachers who brought their students to the site and interpreters had become skilled at involving students. The Fort Point Environmental Living Program, aimed at grades four, five, and six, allowed students to play the role of soldiers as they stayed overnight. It was consistently oversubscribed and site managers scrambled to meet demand. The Fort Point Ecowalk, Bay Marine Ecowalk, and other similar shoreside programs functioned with the input of the San Francisco Unified School District. At a time when the Park Service had few programs to counter claims of its neglect of younger visitors, Fort Point and by extension Golden Gate National Recreation Area, provided high-quality interpretation that targeted this much sought constituency.[383]

"Parks for the people, where the people are" continued as the primary theme of much of the park, and accessibility and recreation took precedence over interpretation. Fort Point and the other major interpretive areas, such as the maritime museum, remained anomalous and easier to interpret because of the inherent focus on cultural resources at such places. These areas fit the conventional definitions of interpretive areas better than the rest of the park and in interpretation context they functioned with considerable autonomy. As a result, interpretation played a greater role in these subareas of the park than elsewhere. Only Alcatraz Island stood out for the introduction of an interpretive program, but in many ways, the unique characteristics of the island drove the process. The controlled ingress and egress and safety issues on the island meant that rangers needed to guide visitors around Alcatraz. With rangers' presence, the number of visitors tour boats brought to the island, and the peculiar place of Alcatraz in the national imagination, an interpretive program needed to be developed.

By the early 1980s, a shift to more traditional interpretive programs began throughout the park. Equally driven by the planning process and by the beginning of a clear definition of a broader purpose for the park, interpretation needed resources. Most interpretive activities were expensive. Museum design and the acquisition of artifacts cost money, and to achieve the ends the Park Service wanted, interpreters had to be employed. During the early years of the Reagan administration, finding resources for anything in the park system was a chore; when the answer was personnel, the chances of receiving adequate financing diminished even further. Golden Gate National Recreation Area needed an entity that could assist its burgeoning interpretive program with resources.

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[383] Cooperating Association Coordinator to All Regional Chiefs of Interpretation and Visitor Services, May 27, 1977; Site Manager, Fort Point to Cooperating Association Coordinator, Harper's Ferry, August 30, 1977, FAPR, Box 14, K 1815 – Interpretive Activities, Services and Facilities.

The Golden Gate National Park Association filled that niche. Since its founding, Golden Gate National Recreation Area had participated in a group called the Coastal Parks Association, the only one of the many nonprofits groups associated with the park that had achieved cooperating association status with the National Park Service. The Coastal Parks Association had its roots in Point Reyes National Seashore. By 1980, some staff members at Golden Gate National Recreation Area felt that the association focused too narrowly on the national seashore at the expense of the larger Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Allocation of resources dogged the relationship; most of the funds that the Coastal Parks Association generated went to Point Reyes National Seashore. Although Chief of Interpretation Greg Moore noted that part of the lack of interest stemmed from inaction by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the park recognized that the situation did not serve its best interests. Beginning in 1979, the park explored creating a different relationship with a nonprofit group. The first effort assessed the feasibility of making the National Maritime Museum Association into the cooperating association for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Both the park and the association had reservations, and in the middle of 1980, Golden Gate National Recreation Area still searched for the best alternative for a cooperating entity.[384]

The agency considered three options. Each possessed advantages and drawbacks. The Coastal Parks Association presented the difficulty of focus. For it to function as well for Golden Gate National Recreation Area as for Point Reyes National Seashore, the park needed to commit sizable amounts of staff time. The National Maritime Museum Association presented similar issues. Its board was committed to the park's maritime resources and feared dilution of its mission. The third option, a new cooperating association, designed specifically for Golden Gate National Recreation Area and geared to focusing its impact on interpretive activities, entailed a great deal of work for the park but offered the best opportunity to meet the park's needs. In a bold executive decision, General Superintendent William Whalen opted for a new association.[385]

The Golden Gate National Park Association (GGNPA) started with a cadre of people with park experience. A former park ranger who had worked for the Denver Service Center and become chief of Interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Greg Moore, took a leave of absence to play a role in establishing the new organization. Founded in 1982 by a "handful of us," as Moore remembered, and spearheaded by Judy Walsh, the association began to gather momentum. The impetus from the park was unusual; although cooperating associations often developed through parks, there were few cases in which the decision to start an organization came from the park superintendent and a number of park personnel took leave or left the agency to follow through. In 1982, Walsh was hired as a part-time director for the organization and remained in that position for about three years. By 1985, GGNPA had done well enough to hire a full-time director, and Greg Moore was hired in that capacity.[386]

When Moore took on the leadership, GGNPA was a small operation. Three employees comprised the staff and small bookstores in the various visitor centers around the park provided most of its revenue. The material GGNPA offered was interpretive in nature. In the subsequent

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[384] Memorandum: Cooperating Association Future at GGNRA, Chief of Interpretation to General Superintendent, July 14, 1980, SOA II, Box 1, A-42 Cooperative Associations.

[385] Memorandum, Cooperating Association Future at GGNRA, July 14, 1980; Memorandum: Development of a GGNRA Cooperating Association, December 11, 1980, SOA II, Box 1, A-42 Cooperative Associations.

[386] Greg Moore, interview by Hal Rothman, July 16, 1999.

fifteen years, as a result of what Moore called the association's "comparative advantage" of being located in an urban park that enjoyed strong public support, GGNPA grew into the largest cooperating association for any single national park area. Its value to the park's programs far exceeded its enormous financial contribution, which by the late 1990s was more than $4 million per annum. GGNPA served as a community liaison, a public relations entity for the park, a fund-raising division, and a supporter of interpretive and resource management programs. Closely tied to the park, GGNPA became a major source of funding and expertise in the transformation of interpretation at the park. It also expanded the role of park cooperative associations, becoming a partner in major development and adaptive re-use projects at Crissy Field and Fort Baker. No other cooperative association had played such a significant role in any park area.[387]

The shift to developing more traditional interpretation programs began as the new cooperative association took shape. Interpretation programs at Golden Gate National Recreation Area served a broader variety of purposes than at most national park areas. The park system developed its interpretation from the context of cultural tourism, an affirmation of the triumph of American society as people of the first three decades of the twentieth century recognized it. By the 1980s, a full decade after the great cultural upheaval of the 1960s and its transformation of American values, the tone of much park interpretation seemed stale and hackneyed, tied to an earlier vision of progress that post-Watergate Americans viewed dubiously.[388]

At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the complicated local ethnic history set atop the military fabric provided one venue for redesigning the way interpretation reached many publics. The park's abundant natural resources and the strong local environmental community tradition added another dimension. Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, the Spanish and their descendants, Russians, and Italian Americans comprised important components of the regional story. In addition, the park had to deliver different varieties of interpretation in widely disparate places. The San Francisco unit contained tremendous urban fabric; Marin County revealed rural themes. Interpretation for the enormous day-use constituency, the daily recreational users of the park, posed other questions. Day-use patrons might not be candidates for conventional interpretation, but interpretation could become user information for this group. As it did in many parks, such information might include listing of available trails, hazards, and traffic information as well as more conventional forms of interpretation. Again, the incredible variety of audiences and resources at Golden Gate National Recreation Area meant that the mission of interpretation had to expand.

The General Management Plan illustrated the position of interpretation in the park. This comprehensive planning document, designed to guide the park's future, described interpretation very generally in the larger conceptualization of the park. Although the management objectives for Point Reyes National Seashore discussed interpretation in passing, the plan's management objectives for Golden Gate National Recreation Area failed to mention interpretation as a discrete category. Despite many themes that clearly called for some kind of communication with the public, interpretation planning paled in comparison to other goals such as integrating park functions with San Francisco and other Bay Area communities, and natural resource

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[387] Moore interview, July 16, 1999; Judd Howell to Greg Moore, October 14, 1987, NRMR, Box 2, 1987 Activities.

[388] Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 1-27; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 58-63, 172-79.

management. Cultural resources provided an important subsection and the objective to "Provision a Broad Variety of Park Experiences" could be construed as including interpretation, but the implication of the absence of a clearly defined and specific goal was stunning.[389]

In the GMP, interpretation remained closely tied to recreation, an unusual pairing that reflected the recreational dimensions of the park. The park was to become a laboratory for public education. Interpretation was to focus on discovery of the park's attributes, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility for the park among the public, understanding the social and natural history of the region, and increasing awareness of the regional environment. Ultimately, the experience was supposed to increase visitor enjoyment of park resources. Compared to conventional park interpretation and especially considering the remarkable historic fabric in existence, these were modest goals. The details of interpretation programs were melded into the development section of the plan, maintaining the autonomous character of each subarea within the park.[390]

The reasons for qualified attention were plausible. Again, the question of the attributes and goals of national recreation areas loomed large. Despite a growing agency desire to manage all park areas in the same fashion, the predisposition of planners and managers continued to regard national recreation areas as different from national parks and other named categories in the system. Because of the unusual creation of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which subsumed Fort Point, Muir Woods, and other areas with traditions of self-management into one large and sometimes unwieldy entity, these internal units functioned with great autonomy. Both Muir Woods and Fort Point developed interpretation programs before the plan, and in the larger context of planning an enormous and complex regional entity, it was easy to leave interpretation to grassroots management. The division of the park into ranger districts, also autonomous, impeded the implementation of larger interpretation objectives. In 1980, eight years after park establishment, the Park Service had yet to become sure of its obligations to the public at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Much of the interpretation the Park Service offered began in visitor centers, the key structure in most national park areas. Most parks had one major visitor center; a few had two or more, usually when there were two distinctly different and heavily traveled entrances to the park. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the centralized structures to which the agency was accustomed did not work. There were as many as twenty-five entrances to the park, so the function of a centrally located visitor center had to be spread out to many possible entry points. Nor did a large portion of the potential users of Golden Gate National Recreation Area fit the profile of visitors who used a visitor center. Day users, repeat outdoor users, and countless others sought the park's resources, but seemed unlikely candidates for the information imparted in a visitor center.

The Park Service understood visitor centers as integral to its mission, and plans for Golden Gate National Recreation Area included the construction of a number of them as ways to facilitate public interaction and interpretation. The first Golden Gate National Recreation Area visitor center was established in a historic structure at the Headlands in 1974; before its renovation, only Fort Point and Muir Woods, still independent units, had separate visitor centers.

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389 *General Management Plan and Environmental Analysis, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore, September 1980* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1980), 3-12.

390 *General Management Plan*, 29-35.

That summer, the Park Service took administrative control of much of Fort Barry and Fort Cronkhite; and among the first things the staff established was a combination visitor contact station/ranger station/visitor center in Building 1050 at Fort Cronkhite. The Army still occupied most of the other buildings at the fort and Building 1050 was selected because it was available, and it was near the beach, which park managers correctly assumed would be the primary visitor destination in the new area. The tiny building contained offices, search-and rescue equipment, an information desk, embryonic displays and a minuscule bookstore. Interpreters set up a display of historic photos of coast defense batteries and the Headlands Visitor Center was in full operation. Simultaneously, the Alcatraz staff worked at establishing a first generation "museum" on the island. Not quite a visitor center, it lacked a video-taped introductory presentation. Within a few years, an information desk appeared as well, but the unique circumstances on Alcatraz, with its remarkable control of visitor access, did not require a conventional visitor center.[391]

In 1975, the park tried to establish a visitor center at park headquarters in Fort Mason that would serve the function of the large visitor centers common at the entry of most national parks. The Fort Mason location posed problems. Although the fort served as the administrative headquarters of the park and in many ways became its social center with the development of the Fort Mason Center, it was not a place that many of the users of recreational resources in the park encountered. As an attempt at a park-wide visitor center, the Fort Mason effort illustrated that reaching the wide variety of visitors to the park was far more difficult than anticipated. The timing of the Fort Mason Visitor Center was fortuitous. It started as a weekends-only facility that consisted of movable display panels that park staff rolled into the ground floor hallways on Saturdays and Sundays and then stowed in a back room during the work week. In 1976, the facility expanded into the large downstairs room now used for public meetings, both as a place to install expanded park-related displays and also as a location for traveling exhibits, common during the Bicentennial year of 1976. But location doomed the effectiveness of this visitor center, for Fort Mason did not routinely draw the constituencies that used the park. By the early 1980s, it had become the Western Region's Information Center, a repository of information from parks around the West placed there to fulfill the outreach mission for the San Francisco–based regional office.[392]

The Cliff House Visitor Center followed in 1978. Although park staff recognized that the space was not optimal for visitor contact, the agency had few options. As in the Headlands, the structure was the only one made available. The first NPS ranger to operate the new facility found it wanting not only in location but in convenience. Complaining that during the entire planning process no one had ever considered a staff bathroom, she had to close the Visitor Center and go into the Cliff House, a trip that involved climbing up three flights of stairs and then descending two more. The shortcomings of relying on existing space were never more apparent.[393]

At the Maritime Museum, the "visitor center" consisted of a tiny desk with an attached chair where the ranger staff sat while on duty, surrounded by the museum's exhibits. Not technically a visitor center, the post served to advertise the Park Service's presence. Prior to Park Service administration of the Maritime Museum in 1977, the Museum Association ran a

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391 John Martini to Hal Rothman, June 16, 2000.

392 Martini to Rothman, June 16, 2000; Steve Haller, interview by Hal Rothman, June 15, 2000.

393 Martini to Rothman, June 16, 2000.

bookstore there and the salesperson offered some information to visitors. The NPS sought to establish its presence, and supervisor John Martini decided to put in a formal information desk that would be similar in design to, but separate from, the bookstore. Curator Karl Kortum, who did not like either the NPS or its rangers and who assigned park staff just one antique desk, battled the concept. "I don't know if this counts as a true Visitor Center," Martini recalled, "but we did manage to cram the desk with the mandatory brochures and maps, as well as an information board announcing when the next tour would start."[394] Once again the agency found obstacles to the implementation of its primary strategy for reaching visitors.

In a move that reflected long-standing Park Service conventions, the three visitor centers became the way the agency measured the success of early interpretation. The agency initially regarded the number of visitors who used the visitor centers as its bellwether, reporting that the park's three visitor centers served 153,744 visitors in 1977, an increase of 10 percent over the previous year.[395] This concession to the modes of more traditional national parks simultaneously acknowledged that the Park Service saw interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the same terms as it did everywhere else and also meant that the way it regarded the topic guaranteed that many—maybe even most—park users were unlikely to encounter interpretation. Another of the many ways in which Golden Gate National Recreation Area challenged Park Service norms became evident in the reading of planning and accounting for visitation.

The drive to expand the number and reach of visitor centers continued after the approval of the GMP. In 1988, Muir Woods received a new visitor center. The agency constructed a new visitor center at Fort Funston and moved the one in the Headlands as well.[396] Section 110 governed each area, compelling the agency to look first at existing resources before planning new construction. The Fort Funston facility came to fruition in the early 1990s. The recommendation to set up a ranger station/visitor center at Fort Funston, because the existing station at East Fort Miley was totally inaccessible to the public, had been under consideration for at least a decade. The South District law enforcement rangers vociferously opposed the move, observing that even a Visitor Center would not bring anyone to remote Fort Funston. From the headquarters Interpretive Division staff, John Martini felt that the move could be a good one if the facility was sited in an accessible and appealing location. The former NIKE assembly building adjacent to the parking lot seemed perfect. Every vehicle that entered Fort Funston had to pass the structure. Only one obstacle stood in the way. A hang-gliding organization called Fellow Feathers held a permit to use the structure as a hangar and park management remained sensitive to constituency questions. In the end, Golden Gate National Recreation Area determined not to evict or relocate the tenant to make way for staff use. The visitor center and ranger offices were eventually established in a former NIKE-era building at the extreme southern end of Fort Funston, far from most vehicular traffic. Despite signs and other enticements, few visitors arrived there because they headed for the hang-gliding area and adjacent parking lot. The visitor center only operated for four years, closing on September 30, 2000, while the few visitors who find their way to the ranger offices find their basic needs met when staff is at hand.[397]

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[394] Ibid.

[395] Annual Report, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, 1977, 19, SOA II.

[396] Annual Report, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, 1977, 19, SOA II; Annual Report Highlights, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, FY 1986, NRMR, Box 3, 1986.

[397] Martini to Rothman, June 16, 2000.

In 1992, the original Fort Cronkhite Visitor Center was relocated to the refurbished Fort Barry Chapel. In the mid-1980s, an Interpretive Prospectus for the Headlands had been prepared by the Park Service's main interpretation support center at Harpers Ferry that recommended the move to the former chapel. This resulted from the recognition that not every visitor to the Headlands went to the beach. Although a huge percentage of visitors never left Conzelman Road, an artery through the Headlands, all those who did venture further in the Headlands had to pass near the chapel and park staff decided its highly visible location fit the criteria for an expanded visitor center. The building required considerable work to comply with federal statute and to be safe for visitors. Issues such as accessibility and historic preservation loomed during renovation, and planning for design exhibits and information facilities for the center were costly. In a reflection of one of its prime goals, GGNPA financed the design and rehabilitation work, including the interpretive planning. The Headlands ranger staff were deeply involved in planning at all levels, negating any sense that GGNPA replaced the park's functions. The new Marin Headlands Visitor Center served as a model of the kinds of partnerships crucial to Golden Gate National Recreation Area. At the grand opening, Superintendent Brian O'Neill announced that he hoped to repeat the process of updating visitor centers throughout the park in partnership with GGNPA.[398]

Despite the reliance on cultural resources, the drive for visitor centers as central cogs in park interpretation illustrated the dilemma of NPS planning at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Agency history dictated that parks funneled visitors through a central location before guiding them to the resource and the visitor center was institutionalized in agency culture. Unlike the situation at most park areas, visitor centers were not the sole linchpin of interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The park's many audiences needed a broader range of information at a wider array of locations. The struggles over visitor center location and the ineffectiveness of the ones that were not in the direct path of any kind of park travel flow dictated a different response. If Golden Gate National Recreation Area could not build a single central visitor center that reached the vast majority of its audience, the function of visitor centers remained less significant than at other parks and in some ways more problematic. If visitor centers did not reach the broadest constituency, then the park needed another way to accomplish its goals. Conversely, the lack of perception of Golden Gate National Recreation Area as one park made the visitor centers even more important as ways to reach people. The problem, that people did not seek out visitors centers at the park, loomed even larger from this perspective.

By the early 1980s, the park's Division of Interpretation had begun to implement interpretation programs throughout Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Outdoor signs at all kinds of locations provided a medium well-suited to the park. Working with Harpers Ferry Center, the division coordinated an information program that produced graphics and text for more than one hundred wayside exhibit and information-kiosk panels. Park staff and at least fifteen organizations contributed time to the project. The Interpretation Division also supported the work of the Headlands Institute, in particular by reviewing plans for environmental education and the Headlands Art Center, transportation proposals, and programs for special populations. Park staff members also stepped up research and interpretation of ethnic history and coordinated a draft scope of collections for the National Maritime Museum. They also developed interpretive

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[398] Ibid.

training for park interpreters, provided technical assistance to permittees and outside organizations, and maintained assistance for exhibits in a number of areas.[399]

Much of the success of the Division of Interpretation came not from facilities development, but from interactive programs such as community outreach and site stewardship programs, enhanced by the cooperation of GGNPA. Many of the functions of the division more closely resembled the kinds of activities that entities such as the Harpers Ferry Service Center typically undertook. The complex nature of the park made interpretation more than just communication with visitors. Planning, the development of open houses to bring new organizations in touch with the park and its facilities, cooperative arrangements with outside groups that used parklands and facilities, and other similar programs comprised a significant percentage of interpretation efforts.[400]

The NPS Urban Initiative provided one of the best examples of the expanded role of interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In 1979, with William Whalen still serving as agency director, the premium on service to urban constituencies remained high. Whalen challenged the park system to better serve urban constituencies, a role for which Golden Gate National Recreation Area was very well suited. During 1979, the Division of Interpretation planned, coordinated, and evaluated a broad of range of programs for this purpose. These included Great Explorations, an environmental awareness outreach program that served 12,100 people in 1979 alone. The Cultural Heritage program included summer festivals celebrating Native American, African American, Asian, Latino, and European cultures, reaching more than 70,000 people. The Energy Awareness program created a "Conservation Household," a former military residence next to park headquarters that was being developed as a model for energy conservation in private residences, and a series of energy education programs were developed for specific areas of the park, including Alcatraz, Hyde Street Pier, Fort Point, Fort Funston, and the Marin Headlands. The Wilderness Dance Concert brought more than 2,000 people to a series of twenty multimedia dance performances throughout the Bay Area. The dances emphasized the relationship of people to wilderness, furthering one of the goals of NPS environmental programs.[401]

More than conventional interpretation or the engagement of visitors with knowledge and ideas, at Golden Gate National Recreation Area the Division of Interpretation took on a number of the functions of community development and public relations. Interpretation served another broader function at Golden Gate National Recreation Area as it became the venue through which most of the public encountered not only the park, but the agency that ran it. Visitors encountered interpreters, who until the 1994 reorganization served as technical staff support to the ranger districts. After the reorganization, organizations beseeched the new Division of Interpretation for space, and cooperating organizations worked with the division to find ways to implement their programs. Interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area became much more than visitor centers. It became the way in which the public met the park and the Park Service as well as the way in which the park communicated with its many publics. A powerful concern for

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[399] 1977 Annual Report, 1980 Annual Report, 22-27, both SOA II.

[400] 1981 Annual Report, 19-24, SOA II.

[401] 1979 Annual Report of the General Superintendent, March 1980, 13-14, SOA II.

articulating the complicated themes that expressed the history of the park and the region around it underpinned interpretation.

Planning for interpretation moved slowly. Although the GMP called for an Interpretive Prospectus as the next step in interpretive planning, individual subunits were asked to design theme-specific prospecti for their subareas prior to a park-wide document. The time and money to undertake this had to come from existing budgets, so the process was slow and cumbersome. Although the Alcatraz Interpretive Prospectus was published in 1987 and other areas developed their own, as late as the end of the 1990s a Golden Gate National Recreation Area Comprehensive Interpretive Plan had not been completed.[402] As a result, despite its enormous significance and many roles at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, interpretation remained amorphous at the park.

The fundamental malleability of interpretation served the mission of the Park Service at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The lack of definition provided flexibility, which meant that interpretation could be responsive to community needs in a way that a fixed planning process might not permit. On one level, the visitor center-based interpretation, aimed at people who came to the park to see cultural and natural history, served its goals well. The other dimension, interpretation that aimed at constituency-building, often by promoting the concept of stewardship, enjoyed the room to grow.

GGNPA played an essential role in that growth. By 1983, the new cooperating organization had become an important contributor to the park. It brought in more than $100,000 in grants for projects, designed a new bookstore for Hyde Street Pier, expanded the items it offered for sale, and planned a major fund-raising campaign. It also began to shape the direction of interpretation, promoting both the development of interpretation programs for cultural and natural resource management and the constituency-building programs that were the hallmark of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Among the most successful was the Site Stewardship program, a blend of cultural and natural resources management that attracted the public in impressive ways.[403] As a nonprofit organization, GGNPA enjoyed options that the Park Service could not match. Not governed by the same kind of statutory regulations, it could function with greater flexibility. The funds it generated were not designated for the narrow budgetary categories of government; GGNPA could apply especially the revenues it earned from sales in any way that fit its charter. It also had the ability to hire people quickly and to compensate them at market rates. Equally important, GGNPA could more easily let unsuitable personnel go than could a government agency. Within a few short years of its founding, GGNPA had become a full partner with the park in interpretation.

GGNPA quickly emerged as a crucial asset for the park. In some ways the organization functioned much like any other cooperating association, but its size, reach, fund-raising ability, and skill at negotiating the Bay Area made it an invaluable partner for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. GGNPA played a more prominent role at Golden Gate National Recreation Area than any other cooperative agency in the park system. Its evolution into an entity that assisted the park in planning and development suggested an evolution into more than mere partnership. GGNPA became part and parcel of the park's future. In the Bay Area, the Park Service worked through emissaries even before the founding of the park, and GGNPA, closely

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[402] *General Management Plan*; *Interpretive Prospectus – Alcatraz* (1987); Steve Haller, telephone conversation with Hal Rothman, June 14, 2000.

[403] 1983 Annual Report, 37, SOA II.

tied to the park but without the restrictions of government policy, reached into important places in the community that the Park Service could not. GGNPA had grown out of the interpretive division of the park and the synergy between the association and the Division of Interpretation became a defining feature of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

At the same time, interpretation continued to move away from the recreational emphasis of the 1970s and toward a resource-based formulation that often included a management message. In the park's early years, interpretation focused on guiding people around the various features. The GMP began to direct interpretation efforts toward specific park resources, and in many circumstances, that kind of interpretation became closely intertwined with messages about the value and use of park resources. As this trend became more apparent, the two disparate functions of interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area merged. The park interpreted resources and used them to explain the mission of the Park Service and offer a message about stewardship. Park Service interpretation added the characteristics of modern communications media.

As GGNPA took a leading role in supporting interpretation in the mid-1980s, the emphasis shifted from conventional cultural resource sites such as Fort Point to the natural features of the park. This change in direction stemmed from many sources. Environmental groups and open space advocacy organizations had been instrumental in the founding of the park and their influence persisted. In most circumstances, support for the park focused on natural issues and as a result, the overwhelming influence of this constituency extended to nearly every area. In addition, many of the people drawn to interpretation came from natural resource backgrounds as did the immense number of volunteers who wanted to help the park. Their predisposition was to interpret natural resources. GGNPA also found that the Bay Area readily supported projects that involved natural features. Despite the outstanding military architecture of the park, natural resource management received a relatively large share of interpretive attention and resources.

In this respect, interpretation mirrored the ongoing set of issues that characterized Golden Gate National Recreation Area and pointed it toward the future. Not only did the definition of the park as a "national recreation area" leave the question of interpretation more open than in national parks and other conventionally labeled park areas, but constituency building, regional partnerships, and the diffuse location of park resources also contributed to a complex management arrangement. In all the ways that Golden Gate National Recreation Area was different from a traditional national park, its interpretation equally diverged from convention. Interpretation simultaneously presented resources to the public and presented one of the best opportunities for furthering the partnerships that had always been crucial at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It increasingly became important to the future of the national park system.

The relationship between GGNPA and Golden Gate National Recreation Area came to define the park. The resources GGNPA created supported many of the park's most important initiatives and the organization played a significant role in creating the image of the park in most public settings. Governed by a board of trustees who stood out for their expertise and determination, "a bunch of fireballs," as Doug Nadeau referred to them, GGNPA retained an innovative and creative spirit, accomplishing remarkable goals for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Its leaders included some of the most influential and civic-minded citizens of the Bay Area, among them Roy Eisenhardt, president of the Oakland A's, who was elected

president of the GGNPA board in 1985.[404] In most situations, GGNPA and the park smoothly worked together; in a few instances, incomplete communication and a differing assessment of the issues led to tension in the relationship. GGNPA's flexibility and creativity were sometimes the envy of park staff who found the means to achieve their goals blocked by federal rules, regulations, and the cumbersome nature of government. Even though GGNPA only engaged in projects with the park's concurrence, in some quarters the feeling that the power in the relationship resided with the cooperating association grew.[405]

The advantages of GGNPA were numerous and as the 1990s progressed, the role of GGNPA became the subject of debates among park staff. Without increases in staff, the park could not expand the services it offered. During the early 1990s, when a recession seemed to single out California and after 1994, when the Clinton administration attempted its reorganization of government and the Park Service shifted many of the regional office functions to individual parks, the park turned to GGNPA for funding any innovation it sought to undertake. GGNPA grew and assumed more responsibility, broadening both its programs and its ability to help the park. The relationship worked well, as Superintendent Brian O'Neill and GGNPA Executive Director Greg Moore formed a close and interdependent team. Some in the park had difficulty with this arrangement and even questioned where authority really lay.

Alcatraz became the focus of much of this tension. The island had a culture of its own, distinct from the rest of the park. Its interpreters, colloquially called "Alcatroopers," defined themselves as different and they felt the duty they undertook confirmed that self-representation. Alcatraz was different, its interpreters insisted, harder and it required more grit and determination from its rangers. They felt a powerful proprietary sense about the place and their mission there, a sentiment common among park personnel throughout the park system but accentuated by the peculiarities of service on Alcatraz. As visitor demand for the island grew, providing interpretation became an increasingly tendentious management question that involved GGNPA. Although the association contributed to a number of important projects at Alcatraz, some of its efforts seemed to some to overtake the park. One, Alcatraz: The Future, a plan designed for GGNPA by noted landscape architect Lawrence Halprin in 1988, exacerbated the tension. Coming from outside of the park system and accustomed to operating with bountiful resources, Halprin sought to accentuate the openness of the island. "The symbol that is Alcatraz becomes the metaphor for our American West!" Halprin wrote in the introduction. "A frontier, a place of discovery." It was a bold plan that some in the Park Service thought impractical at best.[406]

Even though the plan had been developed at the request of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, its style and goals seemed a little quirky to park staff. With the superintendent's permission, GGNPA gave Halprin a free hand, and in his quest to open all of the island to visitors, Halprin ignored existing regulations and resource management obligations. To many in the park, he operated outside of the constraints of park management. Some members of the staff soon decided that Halprin was out of touch with the values they represented and his plans did not protect park resources. In one often retold story, Halprin "blithely waved his hands" as he

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[404] Doug Nadeau interview, October 6, 1998, Presidio Oral History; Lloyd Watson, "From the Ballpark to a National Park," *SFC,* March 21, 1986.

[405] Moore interview, July 16, 1999; Nadeau interview, October 6, 1998.

[406] Lawrence Halprin, *Alcatraz: The Future* (San Francisco: Golden Gate National Parks Association, 1988), 3.

walked the island when confronted with questions such as the nesting area for Heermann's gulls and impacts on historic structures that required Section 106 and 110 compliance. The park appreciated the visionary conceptualization, but in the minds of many resource managers, Halprin's approach did not pay sufficient attention to legislation and other constraints.[407] The Halprin plan contributed to questions about who was really in charge of Alcatraz and by extension, the entire Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Rightly or wrongly, some in the park mused that GGNPA had become too important, and Halprin contributed to the spread of that sentiment.

The issue came to a head over interpretation at Alcatraz. In 1984, the open island concept debuted for Alcatraz, a management strategy that gave visitors far more leeway that ever before. In 1987, the Park Service instituted self-guided tours of islands with headsets. The new system provoked a firestorm of controversy. Interpreters revolted. Faced with a new technology that some believed performed their job without them, some rangers feared being consigned to the scrapheap of island history. In the highly controlled environment on the island, the headsets could replace them forever, becoming a precursor of the end the role of the interpreter—so coveted by so many—elsewhere in the park system. The headsets became a defining moment for the fifteen permanent and seven seasonal interpreters that summer and reinforced the oppositional feelings of Alcatraz rangers. Even after the headset system was installed, the tension remained palpable. Two different modes of interpretation competed. The headsets won the Director's award for best piece of interpretation and even garnered praise from *Preservation* magazine, always a tough critic of Park Service activities. Yet the interpreters on the island were not excited about the change. At least one interpreter left and has refused to set foot on the island since.[408]

To a greater degree than opponents of the headsets realized, budget questions drove the transformation. After 1980, when Park Service budgets stagnated as a result of the Reagan administration, visitors' demand for Alcatraz tours continued to grow, and the need for interpreters increased as part of the management strategy for the island. Short of funds and positions, the Park Service used revenue from the concessionaires to hire fifteen summer interpretive staff, an egregious violation of NPS policy. Even as demand escalated, no other financing became available. In 1986, NPS Director William Penn Mott, a former head of the California State Parks system, ordered the practice stopped. For all its controversy about the role of interpreters, the self-guided tour resulted from financial realities that dictated diminishing ranger staff, a prelude to denying countless visitors access to the island. The initiation of the new practice occurred as a result of budgetary constraints and fell within agency guidelines, but it heightened the discontent of some front-line interpreters. When financial constraints hit Golden Gate National Recreation Area, GGNPA often became the solution.

The self-guided tour materials at Alcatraz became exceedingly popular. Between eighty and ninety-five percent of visitors use the headsets, compared to an average of thirty percent in other museum settings. The authentic voices—Jim Quillen, a convicted kidnapper who spent time on the Rock is interviewed and a former corrections officer narrated the tape—the controlled flow inside the cell house, and the easy pattern of movement combined to make self-guided tours a far higher quality interpretive experience than in many other circumstances. By

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[407] Nadeau interview, 70; Halprin, *Alcatraz: The Future*, 8-14.

[408] Rich Weideman, interview by Hal Rothman, July 17, 1999; Dwight Adams, "The Back Page," *Preservation* (1997), 128.

the mid-1990s, when budgets considerably shrank the interpretive staff and the reliance on self-guided tours increased, most interpreters conceded that the headset program offered a high caliber experience and the awards it won confirmed that impression. The growing satisfaction with the audio tours also highlighted the vulnerability of rangers on Alcatraz and contributed to the already existing oppositional mentality they held.

The Park Service faced even rougher times in the mid-1990s, and heightened tension on Alcatraz was one of many results. The election of the Republican Congress in 1994 initiated an attempt to diminish the role of government; some of the proponents of the "Contract with America," Rep. Helen Chenoweth of Idaho prominent among them, regarded the Park Service as a villain and sought to dismember it. Efforts to decertify some national parks emanated from Congress and contributed to increased tensions between the Department of the Interior and Congress.[409] In 1995, a General Accounting Office report on the national park system suggested that doing more with less had never yielded optimal results for the park system. The Park Service, the report recommended, should reduce services or seek more comprehensive partnerships with private entities. At about the same time, the park and GGNPA began to explore the possibility of keeping Alcatraz open at night with an interpretive staff hired by GGNPA. At the request of park managers, the association offered a proposal to open the park after regular hours. The Park Service could not foresee receiving additional full-time employees to expand the program, and the park asked GGNPA to explore the use of its own interpreters as tour guides. At a time when the concept of privatization of national parks enjoyed significant credence, one of the symbolic places of the park system seemed slated to offer interpretation without park rangers.

The proposal set off a rancorous debate with ramifications for the entire national park system. The Alcatroopers responded with a fury derived from a combination of protectionism and powerful allegiance to the historical goals of the agency. Their numbers had already diminished since the beginning of audio tours in 1987; from a peak of as many as thirty summer interpreters, the Alcatraz staff shrank to six in the middle of the 1990s. Nor did they regard the opening of the island at night with GGNPA interpreters as analogous to the beginning of self-guided tours. In 1987, the agency did not have the staff to meet the demand for its posted schedule; in 1996, the night program represented an expansion of service without an agency presence. GGNPA placed hiring advertisements for employees with job descriptions nearly identical to NPS interpreters and interpretation supervisors even before the program was approved. The rangers felt undermined and fought back. Hewing to reasoning that they traced back to the second director of the Park Service, Horace M. Albright, and quoting the vaunted director's words, "be ever on the alert to detect and defeat attempts to exploit commercially the resources of the national parks. Often projects will be formulated and come to you sugarcoated with an alluring argument that the park will be benefited by its adoption," the Alcatroopers blasted the proposal as an abdication of the history and values of the Park Service. "The shifting of program responsibility from a 'public' agency to a private nonprofit that does not have to answer to the public is wrong," a widely circulated position paper by the Alcatroopers insisted. The Alcatroopers' position found considerable sympathy throughout the park and the Park Service. To opponents of the GGNPA guides, the entire program smacked of expedience at the expense of deeply held values and of the fundamental weakness of the agency when faced with political pressure. Deanne L. Adams, president of the Association of National Park Rangers,

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[409] David Helvarg, *The War Against the Greens: The 'Wise Use' Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994), 148-54.

called the Alcatraz proposal "a significant trend-setting action." From the rangers' point of view, the trends it set were negative, pushing the Park Service away from its roots and the practices that sustained it for more than eighty years.[410]

The Alcatroopers' resistance struck a nerve in the Park Service, for the issue on the island reflected larger trends that frightened Park Service personnel across the country. At a time when Congress routinely pilloried federal employees, and out-sourcing, the practice of subcontracting work once done by full-time employees, had become common in American industry, an effort that possessed striking parallels had been initiated by the park's closest partner with the cooperation of the park's executive staff. The rationale, that the park could profit financially and serve a larger public by subcontracting evening interpretation, was part of a larger series of changes that the Alcatroopers and many others in the Park Service rejected. That Albright's iconic status supported their cause was telling; a hard-nosed businessman, Albright loved the parks and defended them against commercial intrusion. He represented an older Park Service, one that stood firm against outside intrusion because it was far closer to government power and far less susceptible to public entreaty. His intellectual legacy boosted morale, inspired pride, and conferred status. It was the mark of "green blood," the Park Service equivalent of military tradition. "Congratulations to the Alcatraz Rangers!" one e-mail posted to the NPS Interpretation electronic bulletin board read, reflecting a level of discontent that stemmed not only from change but from the ways in which the new circumstances demoralized staff and diminished the values for which the Park Service stood. Even as NPS director Roger Kennedy championed protecting the parks "above visitor convenience and income generation," a visible proportion of Park Service line staff felt compromised. The job they had to do was enormous and the resources scant. "We are here to conserve the parks' resources, provide for the public's enjoyment of them, and leave them unimpaired for the future," observed John Martini in a March 1997 e-mail that offered a clear articulation of the agency's creed tinged with reality. "Don't we wish we had the funds and FTE to do all that by ourselves?"[411]

After protracted opposition, the GGNPA tour guides began work in July 1997. Their uniform looked enough like that of a park interpreter to confuse an unwitting public, but was sufficiently different to be distinguished by more than casual observers. Even some very difficult visitors enjoyed their experience with the GGNPA guides. "That evening at Alcatraz they showed me a side of history I'd never before seen," observed Dwight Adams of *Preservation* magazine. "And gave me goosebumps in the process. When was the last time a federal agency did that for you?" Adams observation also illustrated a dilemma for the Park Service. Their presence became a reflection of the changes the Park Service faced nationally as well as a crystal-clear image of the future of park management. Even in the best of times, the government was likely to contract out services that it previously provided with full-time staff. For many federal bureaus, with far less viable and meaningful agency culture than the Park Service, this was not as problematic. For the National Park Service, with "service" in its title and a nearly eighty-year tradition of special pride in its activities with visitors, GGNPA interpretive tour guides served as a harbinger of a complicated future that demanded reorientation of agency values along with practices. Even though the Alcatroopers lost the battle, they asked powerful

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[410] Deanne L. Adams to Roger Kennedy, March 3, 1997, GOGA-Alcatraz at NP-GOGA , 3/3/97, 4:08 p.m. e-mail, copy provided the author.

[411] Mary Kelly Black at NP-WORI, 3/14/97 4:49 pm; Frank Partridge at NP-BICY, 3/14/97 3:14 pm, from Park Service email; for Albright's views, see Donald Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 206-56.

questions about the direction of the agency and about Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Chief among their issues was the relationship between the GGNPA and the park.

Even as it changed agency practice, GGNPA served as the single most significant catalyst in changing the public image of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Since its founding, the park suffered from an ongoing absence of clarity in the eyes of the visitor. The Bay Area public recognized its components, Muir Woods, Fort Point, Alcatraz and other similar features, but never came to genuinely regard these units as linked together in the larger whole of a national park. Each unit had its own identity, and often, its own constituency. The affinity for these places developed before the establishment of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, when they were military or public lands. As late as the 1990s, the public valued the assets of its urban greenspace park, but simply did not see a national park area when it looked at the Marin Headlands, Fort Mason, or any of the other areas of the park. With a few major exceptions, the groups that recognized Golden Gate National Recreation Area treated it as a general umbrella authority over a series of parks rather than as a single entity that administered an entire park. That lack of understanding limited the park's position in the Bay Area and impeded attempts to offer a coordinated vision to its many publics.

By the mid-1990s, in a society where the athlete Michael Jordan had become a brand name, Golden Gate National Recreation Area needed a clearer articulation of its message to the local as well as the national public. In the 1970s and 1980s, the emergence of new categories of identification transformed the buying habits of the American public. Nike and its famous swoosh insignia led the way, and the company's agreement with Jordan elevated the process of identifying products to new heights. Within a very few years, brand names took on a cultural significance they never before possessed, as highbrow and lowbrow culture mixed into "nobrow," in the words of author John Seabrook, "the strip-mining of subculture into mainstream culture, the midpoint at which culture and marketing merged."[412] Always ready to embrace the new, the Bay Area was poised for the transformation of American culture. As Silicon Valley to the south emerged, the San Francisco Bay Area became one of the most sophisticated audiences for marketing.

GGNPA set out to find a solution to the lack of clear identity for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Executive Director Greg Moore envied the strong identity of places such as Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks and with the consent of the park, sought a similar powerful image for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Moore enlisted Rich Silverstein, a trustee of the park association and one of the principles in Goodby, Silverstein and Partners, one of the largest advertising agencies in San Francisco, to help create a new image for the park. Moore sought to bring the agency's creative energy to the park's dilemma, to develop a symbol and a name—a brand—that the public could connect to the physical location. Goodby, Silverstein excelled in developing identity for products; the famed "Got Milk?" campaign was only one of their notable successes. Silverstein himself regarded Golden Gate National Recreation Area as a "magical greenbelt" and sought a strategy for communicating that idea to the public. Silverstein and Moore settled on something they described as small, but revolutionary: they relabeled Golden Gate National Recreation Area "the Golden Gate National

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[412] David Halberstam, *Playing for Keeps: Michael Jordan and the World He Made* (New York: Random House, 1999); J. B. Strasser and Laurie Becklund, *Swoosh: The Unauthorized Story of Nike and the Men Who Played There* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1991); John Seabrook, *Nobrow: The Culture of Marketing the Marketing of Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 212-13.

Parks," creating imagery as part of an effort to articulate the distinctive nature of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Instead of individual units, Silverstein positioned the park as a family of sites allied together. "Don't tell anybody we did that," Silverstein, tongue firmly in cheek, beseeched countless audiences in subsequent years.[413]

The decision to change the name in promotional material did a great deal more than simply create identity. It transformed an ongoing question for the park, the question of the meaning and purpose of national recreation areas. This category had always been amorphous, implying a different manner of management than the flagship national parks despite regulations that insisted on identical management policies for all categories of park areas. When Golden Gate National Recreation Area boldly adopted the name "Golden Gate National Parks," it made a claim to the public for a different kind of status—and a different kind of treatment by the public and management by the Park Service. The subtle name change had profound impact. It gave credence to a transformed mission for the park, one that fell more in line with the mainstream traditions of the Park Service and simultaneously engendered more respect from the local and regional public.

The name change was the first step in a multidimensional campaign to promote the park and its features. San Francisco artist Michael Schwab designed a set of images of places in the park, similar in style but emphasizing different areas—Alcatraz, Olema Valley, Fort Mason, and Muir Woods among them—to illustrate the shared management of the park and promote its resources. These images became a signature; easily recognizable, they connoted a sense of shared destiny. The park also had more than fifty different entrances, graced by thirty-six different styles of signs. The campaign replaced the variety with new Golden Gate National Parks markers, uniform signage distinct from the Schwab images that let the public know when they entered the park. The defining artwork and the signs became cornerstones of a consistent visual package. GGNPA also opened a National Parks store on the Embarcadero and enhanced its network of park friends. Goodby, Silverstein designed a website in three languages: English, Spanish, and Chinese. Through the *San Francisco Chronicle* and direct mail, 15,000 people joined to support the park. To emphasize belonging to the organization and the park, GGNPA produced and sold stickers that created identification for user groups: "I bike the Golden Gate National Parks" read one; others promoted hikers, horse riders, and other activities.[414]

The identification campaign helped create the context in which the most ambitious project GGNPA had ever undertaken, the ecological restoration and interpretation of Crissy Field. The project, conceived late in the 1990s and started in 1996 after characteristically fractious public hearings, was a joint effort of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and GGNPA, with minor assistance from the Presidio Trust, established in 1994 to administer the built-up areas of the Presidio. GGNPA's fund-raising skills made the project feasible. The Campaign for Crissy Field began in 1998 with a target of $27 million. A lead gift of $16 million, $12 million of which came from the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and the remainder from the Colleen and Robert Haas Fund, seeded the project. By 2001, more than $34 million had been raised for a project that had the ability to recreate nature and reinvent the role of Golden Gate

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[413] Rich Silverstein and Greg Moore, "Name-Branding the Parks," public address, "Presidio Stories: A Visitor Experience and Interpretation Symposium," April 14, 2000.

[414] Silverstein and Moore, "Name-Branding the Parks," April 14, 2000; Greg Moore, interview by Hal Rothman, July 15, 1999.

National Recreation Area in the Bay Area. San Francisco Airport contributed large sums to the restoration as part of the requirements that allowed it to expand its runways by developing wetlands elsewhere. Goodby, Silverstein coined the slogan for the campaign, "Help Grow Crissy Field," juxtaposed with the silhouette of a child holding a plant. The advertisements were everywhere in the Bay Area, in the newspapers, on television, on billboards, and on the Internet. Even a city bus was covered with the Crissy Field image. The goal was simple. The public could psychically invest in the project and help to restore the natural habitat at Crissy Field simply by planting one plant in the restored marsh . Hands-on participation guaranteed a sense of proprietary ownership, precisely the kind of public sentiment necessary for the park to serve the community and the nation.[415]

The plan for Crissy Field envisioned nothing less than a comprehensive interpretive, recreational, and natural space in 100 acres along San Francisco Bay. Visionary in every respect, the new Crissy Field was slated to include every dimension of park experience: a promenade with trails, boardwalks, and amenities such as seating areas and picnic tables, open space at the location of the old grass airfield for recreational activities and small public events, a restored twenty-acre marsh that included interpretation and live demonstrations from Ohlone people, the original inhabitants of the Bay Area, a community environmental center, and much more. Archaeological discoveries led to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and a general agreement with area Native Americans that assured archaeological monitoring, compliance with legislative requirements, and interpretation of this important dimension of regional history. Crissy Field reintroduced the modern Bay Area to its original inhabitants as well as provided an outstanding opportunity to meld the restoration of the environment and the cutting edge interpretation of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the setting of the national park.

The Crissy Field renovation was an enormous construction project. At the inception, crews removed more than 230,000 cubic yards of soil and rubble and opened a forty-foot wide channel to the bay. Dune and marsh planning began in November 1999, complete with Ohlone rituals; by early 2000, a smaller version of the historical marsh had begun to take shape and the waterfront region attained a special feel. The expanded promenade was completed late in 1999, the grass airfield reseeded early in 2000, and the project moved toward completion. As construction of the marsh was finished, and its outlet opened to the bay in November1999, fresh water and sea water mixed in the Crissy Field tidelands for the first time in nearly100 years.[416]

One of the most impressive greenspace projects in Bay Area history, the Crissy Field renovation, one of the largest restoration projects the Park Service had ever undertaken, represented the fulfillment of the park's single most difficult mission, the need to be all things to all people all of the time. The new marshland project included nature, culture, and recreation, interpreted the past and the space and left room just to play. The restoration of the airfield provided both open space and a historic scene. Visitors who wanted a natural experience along the waterfront, those who sought to learn about the Ohlone people or about environmental issues, and those who simply wanted to walk, run, or hike all found the space accommodating. In a way that no previous Park Service project had accomplished, Crissy Field melded all the uses and all the park's constituencies. In a little more than 100 acres, it answered the myriad questions about

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[415] Silverstein and Moore, "Name-Branding the Parks;" "Help Grow Crissy Field: A Community Call to Action," *Renewing Crissy Field* 2 (Fall 1999), 1.

[416] "Help Grow Crissy Field: A Community Call to Action," *Renewing Crissy Field* 2 (Fall 1999), 1; "To Friends of Our National Parks," *Renewing Crissy Field* 1 (Summer 1999), 1.

interpreting Golden Gate National Recreation Area and fulfilled each and every one of the complicated mandates of the park's mission.

Crissy Field revealed the complicated tension between uses that characterized Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The plan was supposed to be a historic restoration of a grass airfield where it had been covered by buildings. The airfield clearly had a wider variety of uses as a meadow than as historic space, but the area was still a valuable historic resource. Even though the Crissy plan and the GMP Amendment (GMPA) for the Presidio called for historic restoration, the recreational and environmental dimensions of the plan took precedence. When the Ohlone middens and the historic archaeological areas of Crissy Field were discovered, some felt that the historic resources competed with the marsh restoration and the attempts to promote recreational pastimes such as windsurfing. Addressing the archaeological component also threatened to delay completion of the project. Again, the competing goals of the park pushed against one another.

Crissy Field also illustrated the crucial nature of relationships in the Bay Area. Without GGNPA's outstanding fund-raising experience and capability, without the support of its talented board and volunteers, without the resources it could bring to bear on the process of renovation and the association's acute decision making, the Park Service could never have succeeded with the project. The agency lacked the resources that GGNPA could muster, further illustrating the significance of the partnership with an association that contributed more than $52 million to park projects during its history. The synergy between Golden Gate National Recreation Area and GGNPA was never more clear nor pronounced; the entities were intertwined for the benefit of both and the park's resources. The public could only benefit from the close ties, but in certain circumstances, the boundaries between the park and the association could blur.

To visitors, such a distinction often seemed immaterial. Although in any group of Park Service employees, park interpreters most strongly identified with the values of the agency, outside guides such as those provided by GGNPA could also provide visitors with an excellent experience. In situations such as Alcatraz, and to a lesser degree Crissy Field, NPS interpreters saw themselves as beleaguered, swarmed over by an unappreciative public and recalcitrant funding. "We old-timers always felt the best time for both interpreters and visitors at Golden Gate National Recreation Area were those first years" between 1973 and 1977, observed John Martini, "when everyone who went to Alcatraz received a guided program AND the groups were still small enough to maintain a sense of intimacy with both the interpreter and the resource."[417] During this era, control of visitation numbers at Alcatraz meant that the resources devoted to management of interpretation on the island equaled the demand, a situation that changed as the park and its interpretive mission expanded after 1978. In many ways, the path to the GGNPA interpreters began twenty years before, with the growth of the park and each step, from the Reagan administration's attempts to privatize public holdings to the reinventing of government of the 1990s, had the same composite effect: they forced the park to do more with the same resources. With every increasing demand and level funding and staffing resources, the shift to other kinds of service providers—even in specialized areas such as interpretation—seemed preordained.

Nowhere did this conundrum become more clear than at the Presidio. By the time the transfer of the former Army base to the Park Service took place, the questions of resource distribution and the challenges to the agency's ability to manage its domain were front-line issues. At the behest of Superintendent Brian O'Neill, the CAC empaneled an advisory

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[417] John Martini, e-mail to Hal Rothman, June 25, 2000.

commission to look at options for the Presidio. Along with the superintendent, the committee recommended a public-private model. The recommendation went forward, and after effective lobbying, garnered support in Congress.[418] As a result, the addition of the Presidio followed the public-private partnership model increasingly common in the park system. Much of the administration of the Presidio fell to a congressionally created governing body, the Presidio Trust. In the establishing legislation, interpretation at the Presidio remained the responsibility of the Park Service.

The Presidio presented an enormous interpretation challenge, an amalgamation of the entire history of interpretation at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Its diverse themes, including Native American presence, Spanish, Mexican, and American military themes, and its 470 contributing historic structures as well as a variety of natural habitats and species all presented clear avenues for interpretation. The Presidio contained 1,480 acres of green space and historic scene, managed by the Army for more than a century, which as part of the park became one of the most valuable pieces of urban green space in the nation. The crowded Bay Area coveted the space, and much of the public regarded the highest and best use of the Presidio as recreational green space.

The establishment of the Presidio Trust, with its clear financial mandate, both created opportunities and complicated the possibilities for interpretation. At the core of the Trust's mission was financial self-sufficiency, for the Presidio's unique mandate—being able to pay its own way by 2013 at a cost of as much as $36 million per year, was daunting. Although the GMP Amendment, the document created by the park service in 1994 to guide the Presidio's transition from military post to national park, clearly identified natural and cultural interpretive themes, the need to generate revenue from the former post pushed real estate and leasing to the fore and interpretation and resource protection to the peripheries of the planning process during the late 1990s. Although the written agreements stipulated that each tenant make a contribution to the interpretation of the Presidio as a condition of their lease, in early 2000, the effort was not yet comprehensive. The organization of interpretation at the Presidio had not yet evolved far enough to create cohesiveness.

In an effort to accelerate the emphasis on interpretation, the park, the Presidio Trust, and GGNPA convened a conference in April 2000. A brainchild of Col. Whitney Hall, former post commander of the Presidio, and Redmond Kernan of the Fort Point & Presidio Historical Association, the descendant of the Fort Point Museum Association that lobbied for the national historic site in the 1960s, the Park Service and the Trust organized a conference that brought together almost seventy participants with expertise in cultural and natural interpretation, scholars and educators from the museum community. For two and one-half days, the participants formulated ideas about planning and interpretation for the Presidio, seeking a balance between the visible structures and spaces of the post and needs and ideas of different cultural groups with a stake in the park. As the conference ended, the participants expressed hope that their ideas would be integrated into the process of planning and interpreting the Presidio.

The attempts to interpret the Presidio illustrated the changing nature of interpretation not only at Golden Gate National Recreation Area but in American society as a whole. As late as the 1970s, the themes of a place such as the Presidio or Alcatraz followed a clearly delineated narrative derived from the dominant course of American history. The 1960s changed forever the way Americans looked at their past. What had once been a story of certainty became terrain that

[418] Bartke to Haller, March 5, 2002.

was contested for its symbolic meaning. Nowhere did that transformation manifest itself as clearly as at Alcatraz.

The island had always been a symbol; the number of proposals for its use indicated as much. Its history as a prison enthralled the public, but to Native Americans the island symbolized the betrayal of their people, the promises made and broken in the conquest of the continent. From this perspective, the Indian Occupation of the late 1960s created a new contextualization for the island. Even after they departed the island, Native American people held their claim to Alcatraz as a symbolic battleground close to their hearts. It reflected the injustice they felt they had experienced at the hands of American society.

In commemoration of the occupation and as a symbolic reflection of their claim to the island, Native American people held an annual sunrise ceremony on Thanksgiving Day. It grew from a few people in the early 1980s to more than two thousand in the 1990s. In 1997, Alcatraz Island inaugurated a museum exhibit about the occupation. The people who conceived the event discussed the takeover and its evolution, and individuals who participated found a place to locate their experience in the story of the island. In July 1999, Indian Joe Morris, a man in his eighties who participated in the original takeover, autographed his memoir for scores of eager visitors. Native people held a pow-wow on the island, further demonstrating the newly forged links between the Park Service and the Native American community. "For Native Americans to have a pow-wow on federal property is a real honor, a real testimony to the improved relations between the Park Service and the Indian community," Supervisory Ranger Rich Weideman said. [419]

The Indian Occupation of Alcatraz represented the future of interpretive themes at the park, one place where the Park Service has bridged a gap between Native people, the institutions of the government, and the larger public. An assessment of the occupation-era graffiti contributed to the new seriousness the park granted the occupation, but not everyone thought the new emphasis the best direction. As the Park Service and GGNPA embraced the occupation as a significant theme, other constituencies, especially the Alcatraz Alumni Association, comprised of former correctional officers, were enraged by the decision. From the perspective of former guards and their families, the inclusion of the occupation occurred at the expense of the story of the prison, the one they regarded as most significant and in which they had powerful emotional investment. The terrain of interpretation remained a contest of values.

As the twenty-first century dawned, interpretation filled many roles at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It served as education, explaining nature, natural history, and telling stories about the diverse human past. Interpretation also defined the presence of the Park Service in the region, explaining to the public the limits on behavior in recreational lands and let it reach new constituencies. Multilingual interpretation material and multilingual staff members became crucial as visitation patterns brought broader numbers of visitors who did not speak English. Interpretation served as a constituency-building forum for the agency, bringing local and regional groups into the park's sphere and enabling them to broaden the message the park offered. With the support of a powerful association, GGNPA, the agency had the resources to initiate and maintain a publication program that did a great deal to interpret the park and define its role in the Bay Area.

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[419] Rich Weideman interview, July 17, 1999; Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo. "Holding the Rock: The 'Indianization" of Alcatraz Island, 1969-1999" *The Public Historian*, 23 1 (Winter 2000), 55-74; Carolym Strange and Tina Loo, "'Rock Prison of Liberation:' Alcatraz Island and the American Imagination" *Radical History Review* 78 (2000):27-56.

Yet challenges remained, both at the Presidio and in the rest of the park. Interpretation had made great strides in fulfilling the park's many-faceted missions. Examples such as Crissy Field really did become all things to all people nearly all of the time, but questions of priorities such as those on Alcatraz, of power, such as those in the relationships between the park, GGNPA, and the Presidio Trust, and questions of significance—what kind of interpretation a national recreation area needed—cropped up with regularity. As the public face of the park and as its primary constituency-building endeavor, interpretation served much more complicated functions than did other areas of park administration. Under the circumstances, the ways in which interpretation seemed diffuse and contradictory testified more to the many missions and masters the park had to serve than to any shortcoming in interpretation itself.